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ABSTRACT

Ethnography as an inquiry process guided by a point of view rather than as a reporting process guided by a standard technique or set of techniques is the main point of this essay which suggests the application of Malinowski's theories and methods to an ethnology of the school, indicates reasons why traditional ethnography is inadequate to the study of schools, and locates the school as an institution within a larger societal context and the researcher as a member of that society. The first steps of a fieldwork inquiry process, as presented, require the statement of researchable question while keeping in mind the fact that what is commonplace to observers and to participants is nonetheless extraordinary and that what goes on in the school involves the interaction of individuals, groups, and social units outside of the school. To exemplify the inquiry process the issue of ethnicity as a factor in a school ethnographic study is identified for research and amplified by questions pertinent to field research. (JH)

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WHAT MAKES SCHOOL ETHNOGRAPHY "ETHNOGRAPHIC

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[Ed. Note: Speaking specifically to those who would do ethnography in the schools, Professor Erickson originally prepared this paper as a report to participants in an American Educational Research Association Research Training Workshop which he directed in April 1972. Associate Editor Arthur Katz, a participant in that workshop, assisted the author in preparing this report for publication.]

Introduction

The main point of this essay is that ethnography should be considered an inquiry process guided by a point of view, rather than as a reporting process guided by a standard technique or set of techniques. What gets written down is the report; what gets done in the field is inquiry. The "ethnographer's view" of a social situation may lead him to ask questions whose answer depends upon the invention of special techniques for data collection and analysis (or the re-design of existing techniques to fit the situation under study). But the shape of research techniques and instruments is determined by the ethnographer's explicit and implicit questioning process as informed by (1) his experience in the field situation and (2) his knowledge of previous anthropological research.

The field worker brings a point of view and implicit questions with him to the field. His perspective and questions may change in the field, but he has an idea base from which to start. What results from questioning-in-the-field is a description of (1) regularities of social behavior in a social situation considered as a whole, (2) as the ethnographer experienced those regularities by being there in the social situation, and (3) as he views the situation and situational behavior in the light of the wide variety of human behavior found throughout the world. What I mean by the terms of this proposition--"regularities," "social situation," "whole," "being there," "his view," "variety of human behavior"--is the content of the rest of the essay.

Ethnography and Ethnology: An Etymological Definition

"Ethnography" literally means "writing about the nations:" "graphy" from the Greek verb "to write" and "ethno" from the Greek noun ethnos, usually translated in an English dictionary as "nation" or "tribe" or "people." A more refined definition for ethnos is found in Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon, the standard 19th-Century Greek-English dictionary:[1] "A number of people accustomed to live together, a company, body of men."

What this implies is that the "ethnos," the unit of analysis for the ethnographer need not be a nation, linguistic group, region, or village, but any social network forming a corporate entity in which social relations are regulated by custom. Thus in modern societies a family, a school classroom, a whole school, a work group in a factory, a whole factory are social units which can be described ethnographically (as well as "non-ethnographically).[2]

To do an "ethnology," the ethnographer combines first-hand experience with an awareness of other forms of social life beside his own. In the past, what resulted, at best, was (1) more accurate descriptions of all the essential partial aspects of a society, described with reference to the society as a whole, and at least implicitly, to other societies as wholes, (2) more systematic definition of the social "whole" and its "parts" in terms established by the then-growing disciplines of sociology and ethnology, and (3) less ethnocentric explanations of "strange" customs in terms of their intelligible functions in the society being described.[3]

What does all this have to do with studying schooling or education in American society? How might one do ethnography on American schooling? We are forced to start by recognizing that the specifics of what an anthropologist like Malinowski did in his fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands will not work in the case of American schools. Some of his general principles of fieldwork and reporting can serve as a model for school ethnographers, but not his specific methods, for his social unit differs from ours both in size and in kind. An American school is not a Trobriand village. There may be points of analogy between the two, but there are many points at which the analogy breaks down. For example, the village involves the life of its members 24 hours a day over many generations; the school does not. In the village political authority and exchange relations are heavily influenced by kinship statuses and rules, while in the school special treatment according to kinship status is expressly forbidden by a bureaucratic (and meritocratic) rule system.

Accordingly, we cannot transfer the particular methods of standard ethnographic field research to study of school. But we can identify the general principles for doing the ethnography of a primitive village--a total community in which members hold ascribed statuses, are bound together by reciprocal rights and obligations, exchange goods, and in which knowledge is traditional and slowly changing. We can try to identify which of these general principles still apply when one turns to doing the ethnography of a school--a partial community whose members (ideally) hold achieved statuses, in which rights and obligations are not reciprocal, in which the goods and services exchanged differ markedly in kind, and in which knowledge is non-traditional and rapidly changing.[4]

Malinowski's theories and methods do not work on schools because these methods are not situationally appropriate. Nonetheless his example, which became the paradigm for a whole generation of ethnographers, can be useful for us as well, provided we do not take his model literally, point by point. Malinowski viewed society as divisible for analytic purposes into categories of activity which fulfilled the most basic human needs --social organization (including kinship, marriage, and descent rules), economics, technology, language, belief system.

Views of the School According to Malinowski's Categories

Social Organization

As a way of thinking about the school as a "small community" we could apply to it the fundamental terms of discourse about social organization--"person," "status," "role," "rights," "obligations"--taking very little initially for granted. We can construct propositions about the statuses and roles which exist for persons in the school, and the networks of rights and obligations which link various statuses together:

> Teachers are obliged to obey the principal, whose right it is to be obeyed.
>
> The principal is obliged to protect the teacher from outside interference and the teachers have the right to be protected by him.

Economics

In Malinowski's model social behavior is viewed as exchange. "Exchange" here includes the exchange of valued goods through barter, exchange of symbols of value in a money market, or the exchange of behaviors in some form of parity.

> The classroom can be seen as an economic system of behavior--a political economy--in which students offer deference to the teacher in exchange for kind treatment and the purveying of knowledge.[5]

Belief-System--Religion, Folk Philosophy, and Ritual

The school can be seen as having a world view or ideology perpetuated by the inculcation of "religious" belief (through myth and ritual) and grounded in a "folk philosophy" whose elements are: terms of definition, principles of valuation, rules of logic, methods of explanation for cause, and forms of predictive statements.

Myth

> Features of the school "religion" which have received much attention in the last few years and are the mythic archetypes and motifs in the curriculum.

Creation Myths

> The Coming of the Pilgrims, The Revolutionary War, The Opening of the West, The Civil War, The Rise of the Standard of Living

Mythical Ancestors in Hero Tales of the Creation Myth Cycle

> John Smith, The Pilgrims, Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Lee, Andrew Carnegie

Subsidiary Figures who Advance the Action of the Hero

> The Evil British King (Charles I, George III)
> The Treacherous and Savage but Occasionally Noble and Loyal Indian (Pontiac, Blackhawk, Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Squanto, Pocahontas, Sacajawea)
> The Happy but Lazy Slave
> The Competent and Hardworking Immigrant Who Cleared the Forests, Tilled the Fields, Worshipped God in His Own Way, Came to Work on Time, and Did Not Strike

Folk Philosophy

The belief system of occupants of various statuses in the school social structure is another researchable aspect of cultural world view in the school. The varying "folk philosophies" (metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics) inherent in "teacher culture," "administrator culture," and "student culture" may provide "cultural lenses" through which the same events look very different. Differential perceptions through the different lenses may partially account for differences between administrator, teacher, and student rationales for and responses to social interaction in the school.

> For example it seems to me after working in inservice training with teachers from a variety of schools, inner city and suburban, parochial and public, that some constant features of a teacher belief system, a body of conventional wisdom, can be identified. This folk philosophic system can be seen as composed of the following elements: (1) basic terms, (2) relations between basic terms in the form of statements of basic premises, and (3) relations between terms and premises in the form of statements of correlation/probability, causal explanation, and prediction.
>
> > More concretely, some basic terms are "student," "child," "parent," "individual," "reader," "worker," "high," "low," "good," "under," "over," "slow," "pushing," "attentive," "readiness," "troublemaker." Single terms may be joined to form two-element combination terms such as "good student," "underachiever," "slow reader," "hard worker," reading readiness."
> >
> > > and more complex combination terms such as:
> >
> > "keeping up with the rest of the class," "father-absent family" ("broken home"), "no books in the home," "cultural deprivation" ("bad family background"), "good family background." One aspect of research on terms is to define precisely what is meant by the terms--by "individual," by "good student," by "troublemaker," by "good family background."
> >
> > Basic terms are related to each other in premises of definition and causation--"each child is an individual," "a good student is a hard worker," "a culturally deprived home has no books," "good family background leads to high reading readiness."

Premises are linked together in propositions which relate particular persons and events to causal factors, probability/correlation, or predictive statements in the form "if x then y."

Causal Factor Propositions

> "John is a (troublemaker/slow student/slow reader) because he comes from a father-absent family/broken home/culturally deprived background.)"
>
> "Judy is a slow reader but she comes from a good family background so she must be an underachiever."

Probability/Correlation Propositions

> "Students who come from a culturally deprived background are likely to have low reading readiness."
>
> "Your troublemaker is often a slow reader, and may come either from a broken home or from a good family background in which the parents push too hard."

Predictions

> "If John would pay more attention he would be able to keep up with the class."
>
> "Without more individual attention, slow readers will not be able to keep up with the class."
>
> "If you move over to the door just before the bell rings the students will line up, walk in order out into the hall, and not stampede."[6]
>
> "If you don't keep the kids quiet, the principal will give you a bad evaluation and you won't get tenure."

Some of these statements resulting from "teacher logic" are not totally false. Many of the recommended practices may "work," many of the predictions may come true. But the practices and predictions may be confirmed for reasons other than the causes assumed by the teacher system of conventional wisdom, in which terms and premises often go unexamined, and logic is not rigorous (according to traditional standards).

For example, children from "father-absent families" may have trouble learning to read, but because of self-fulfilling prophecy rather than any inadequacy inherent in lacking a father. If the teacher's expectations are lowered because she knows the child has no father he may have difficulty learning to read. (The existence of orphans who learn to read makes the "father absence causes reading inability" premise logically absurd. The relationship, if it holds at all [and it may] is not so simple as that of direct causation.)

An overall pattern in the logic of the folk belief system of teachers seems to be that blame for a low valued outcome is usually fixed outside the classroom--either "down and out" to the home, or "up and out" to the principal, or to the "system." This pattern makes researchers suspicious of the folk wisdom of teachers. Perhaps the suspicion is unjustified, for wisdom generated through daily experience may work out quite well in daily life even though the system may be predicting mislabeled outcomes for partially or even totally wrong reasons. Faulty or not, if teacher "folk wisdom" exists, it is a factor which should be contended with, both in an ethnographic description, and in plans for educational change.

Careful observation of classrooms, children's outside school behavior, coupled with detailed interviews with teachers in the form "What kind of a student is John? (answer) Why? (answer) Are there others like him in class? (answer)" can provide a more clear evaluation of teacher folk wisdom than to my knowledge exists anywhere in the literature. [7]

Ritual

Grade-school micro-rituals involving only part of the whole school (each classroom) such as Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and macro-rituals involving the total school society such as Christmas Program, accompany sharp decrease or increase in the rates of interaction. The Pledge of Allegiance accompanies the intensification of interaction on a daily time cycle (contact between teacher and students is about to begin for the day) and the Christmas Program accompanies decrease of interaction on a "quarterly" cycle (the school term is about to end and students and teachers are about to leave).

The factor of change in interaction rates among ritual participants may also be accompanied by the factor change in status among participants. [8]

In the initiation rites for athletic and academic honors, the existence of the dual system of status and association is formally proclaimed and celebrated. The school thus gives official sanction to the dual system. Ideally the "academic" system is more "licit" than the athletic, but in the daily operation of the school both systems exist, and both must be legitimated so that order can be regulated and maintained. Through the dual system a principle of "distributive justice" obtains, whereby the academic achievers and non-achievers, WASPS and non-WASPS, higher SES and lower SES, culturally "mainstream" and culturally "different" students can all derive valued commodities (prestigious statuses with attendant rights and privileges) through participation in the school. (This model may explain why in "alternate schools" lower SES students say "we got to have a basketball team.") If all can't catch on the brass ring, all can at least ride the merry-go-round. If one stays on his horse and causes no trouble he eventually "graduates" to the adult carousel. Here Jules Henry's view of the school in the context of the larger society comes through. He saw the school as a preparatory microcosm of American society in which the student learns to ride round and round, smiling whether he catches the brass ring or not.

Some Reasons Why Traditional Ethnography is Inadequate to the Study of Schools

But schools are more than all this. My descriptions of school beliefs and social organization may not ring true, either because of sarcasm or because I have left out crucial details.

Belief in ultimates, whether in Washington, the Flag, the Team, or in the intelligence of children from Good Families--or counter-belief--in the underground newspaper, in the motorcycle, in the beauty of Blackness, or in the eschatology of the General Strike--usually seems absurd from outside the system within which the ultimates have meaning and value. Myth may not only be necessary as an undergirding to social life, but the old philosophic proposition may be true in the reverse --the "unmythic" life may not be worth living. It is not enough for an ethnographer just to stand outside and sneer.

The school is far more complex than my descriptions of it. At best my descriptions are only caricatures. They could not be mistaken for "real life" even though one might agree that some of them are "true to life."

Caricature is systematic distortion--abstracting what the artist perceives to be the most salient features of his subject and presenting

those features in exaggerated form, with broad strokes of the pen. Fine details are left out intentionally, for they may distract the viewer from the overall pattern of main features the artist wants to emphasize. [9]

The caricaturist's ability to abstract, which allows him to get his point across unambiguously, is both his greatest strength and greatest weakness. By choosing different details to emphasize he can present his subject as a titan or a pompous ass, lover or lecher, saint or madman.

Similarly the ethnographer, by selectively reporting details of everyday life in his description of a society--by leaving out a lot--and by slanting his description of those details he leaves in, produces not only a caricature (which is inevitable, since he cannot present every detail) but a caricature which is drawn from a particular point of view and which communicates that point of view relentlessly.

So the following "test questions" must be asked of my ethnography, and of every ethnography:

"How did you arrive at your overall point of view?

What details did you leave out and what did you leave in?

What was your rationale for selection?

From the universe of behavior available to you, how much did you monitor?

Why did you monitor behavior in some situations and not in others?"

I believe that a good ethnography should not only be able to answer those questions, but should provide back-up data to illustrate the decisions made during the research process and (perhaps in an "appendix") descriptions of the kinds and amounts of data that were not available, plus examples of available data that were inconsistent with the overall point of view presented in the ethnography. In other words, the ethnographer should provide his reader with guidelines for the falsification of his analysis, should the reader decide to replicate the study.

This is almost never done in ethnographic reports. It leaves ethnography wide open to charges of "subjectivism," "intuitionism," "journalism," and "ideologism" by positivistic critics. While I do not agree with the positivists, especially those who dominate educational research, I see no reason to leave ethnography of education in an indefensible position before its critics. The positivists have a point. Although I may object to their particular rules of evidence I am forced to admit the general principle that some systematic rules of evidence are necessary.

This is the essence of the "Peltonian, Schensulian, Ericksonian position"--whatever rules of evidence the ethnographer chooses, he should choose some, live by them, and make it clear to his audience what they were and how they affected the course of his research. However, every anthropologist I have ever met has his own opinion on what he thinks the rules of evidence ought to be. Some think there should not be "rules" at all--that the process is too complex and intuitive to reflect upon as you are doing it. But I think that it is best to make the research process as reflective as possible--that this informs and empowers intuition rather than stifles it.

* * *

Doing School Ethnography

Those of us who choose to do ethnography of schooling choose to do so in complex modern societies (or in rapidly developing traditional ones), for in traditional societies most intentional culture transmission ("education") is not institutionalized schooling.

So we begin with a unit of analysis, the institution of schooling, which involves only some members of the society, some hours of each day, some days each year. Schooling transmits only some of the cultural "material" of the society. The organizational form of the institution of schooling, the "school," is located in a limited geographic-demographic setting, with relationships of rights and obligations between the school and that place and its people. The school is also linked by a network of communication, rights, and obligations to larger social units--the school system and school board (which is in the United States a governmental entity), with city, state, and federal government. The school is linked by the formal and informal political process to the economic, ethnic, and religious group interests which activate the political process.

In addition to being a part within a larger scale, the school is also a whole composed of parts--differentiation of persons according to different classes of formal and informal statuses and roles (teachers, students, administrators, paraprofessionals, custodians, parents), with different rates and modes of interaction between statuses, and different spheres and amount of authority and influence accruing to various statuses.

But this is far too much information available to the ethnographer. He must, it seems to me, have strategies for eliminating some of the welter of information, for sorting into categories the behavior and rules for behavior which confronts him. Everything that happens inside the school is potentially significant, but some things are more significant than others. Following Malinowski, most of what happens inside the school is somehow related to what happens outside it, but some of these relationships are stronger than others.

One can't study the city as a whole, or the school neighborhood, or the school itself. Too much is there to monitor holistically, yet holism cannot be eliminated, or caricatures based on "tunnel vision" are the result.

Problems of social unit definition, how to study interaction as unit boundaries, deciding on a sample, generating researchable questions, "operationalization," all become increasingly insistent as one thinks about doing a school ethnography. The research process begins to sound like "ordinary educational research," which is what many of us are disillusioned with already.

In addition to the problem of how to do ethnography on a single institution within a complex society, there is the problem of how an ethnographer who is a member of that society thinks and feels about his society, and how his point of view affects his description. Some of you may have disagreed with the tone of my caricatures of American schools presented earlier in the paper because you disagree with my opinions and feelings toward American society as a whole. My caricatures would not be "true to life" in terms of your social theory.

It was "I" who was "there" doing the fieldwork, not somebody else. Part of my "me" is my fundamental assumptions and prejudices. I cannot leave them home when I enter a site. I must study the place as "me." But you are not "me," and you are not there. It's I who have "been there." So I should at least make explicit to you the point of view I brought to the site and its evolution while I was there, as well as the point of view I left with. The desirable goal is not the impossible one of disembodied "objectivity" (I am a "subject," not an "object") but just clarity in communicating point of view as a "subject," both to myself and to my audience.[10]

In addition to "being me" to my audience, as an ethnographer I have an obligation to have "been there." Really "being there" means experiencing strong relationships with whoever else is "there" (one's "informants"). Some of these relationships may feel good and others may hurt. All of them affect me and change me. However one does "participant observation"--as mostly observer or as mostly participant--it is not involvement with a site at arm's length.

One reason I do not have my "teacher folk wisdom" material well enough in hand yet is that my most intensive field experiences have been with kids, not with teachers. My descriptions of teachers are still from a distance: they ring true, but not true enough. Only after I have really "been there with" teachers will I be able to show how sensible is the system of unexamined conventional teacher wisdom when viewed from within that system.

This is the ethnographer's tour de force: to "make sense" of "outrageous" behavior complexes (eating blood-clot soup, public circumcision of adolescent males [no anaesthetic], gallows humor, sharing one's wife with a guest, teacher explanations for why children fail) by placing the behavior complex in its socio-cultural context. To pull this off as an ethnographer one must not suppress a sense of outrage while in the field, but still stay in there, and take advantage of one's rage, using it as a barometer to indicate high salience. Those aspects of a culture which are simply intolerable are probably the key to the difference between that culture and one's own. The method is not that of "objectivity" but of "disciplined subjectivity."

If there is a culture of elementary-school teachers it is certainly not, in its distinctive features, my own. If I want to describe it adequately I must stay around until it makes sense and then report it so that it makes sense. In my report I may choose to condemn it or not to condemn it, but in either case I am obligated to make it intelligible as seen from within, and to portray the actors in the situation as humans--not as stick figures or monsters. Maybe not "nice" or "good" or "wise" people but "human" people.

It seems to me that far too much of the ethnography of schooling in our own society has fallen short on this point. As ethnographers (and as "journalistic" describers of schools) we give in to our rage too self-indulgently and present schools, teachers, and students as essentially and irredeemably inhuman: at best guided by an impenetrable ignorance, or at worst motivated by zealous malevolence.

I am not proposing here a flabby relativism. But to show that a social process has evil outcomes it is not necessary to describe every actor in the process as either a villain or a klutz. To caricature an American school community in a way that is true to itself, one must show teachers, students, and administrators, parents, politicians, businessmen, motivated occasionally by good as well as ill, guided by "wise" as well as "foolish" elements in their conventional wisdoms, often confused,

sometimes acutely aware of what is happening, muddling through. Such a caricature would not exclude them, but would be true to them in a way that much recent writing about schools is not, whether the writer is a defender or attacker of "the system."

Some may feel that to use one's outrage as a tool in fieldwork, to explain the outrageous as intelligible, is itself outrageous--a schizoid perversion of the emotionally and ethically "normal." Then one should not try to do ethnography, for in that inquiry process the highest law is faithfulness to one's subject matter, however schizy one must become in the process of research.[11] Anthropologists have tried hard to do this as they describe such "outrageous" institutions as the Kachina Ceremony, in which Navajo men dress up as gods in masks and whip children, but anthropologists so often have failed to do this as they describe the "outrageous" institutions of American schooling.

I have characterized ethnography as an inquiry process with one foot in the field situation and the other in the anthropological literature. In conclusion I want to illustrate this by sketching the first steps of a fieldwork inquiry process--what kinds of questions one might bring to what one is seeing, what kinds of significance one might assign to what one sees, and what kinds of logic and basic premises one might use in doing so.

Making the Familiar Strange

The continual question one can ask in the field is this: "Why is this _____(act, person, status, concept) the way it is and not different?" The assumption behind the question is that human behavior varies enough throughout the world that in some other society there is either a quite different conventional way of doing whatever activity I happen to be seeing, or in some society they may not do the activity at all and get along quite well without it.

I don't pay conscious attention to that question all the time but it is always there. Especially in doing ethnography in our own society it is important to keep in mind the oddness and arbitrary nature of the "ordinary" everyday behavior that we, as members, take for granted. This is the philosopher's technique of deliberately making the familiar strange. Upon entering a non-Western society the fieldworker doesn't have to do this. Everything is unfamiliar and much is strange. But when describing institutions of his own society, the ethnographer must adopt the critical stance of the philosopher, continually questioning the grounds of the conventional, examining the "obvious" which is so taken-for-granted by cultural "insiders" that it becomes invisible to them. Often it is the taken-for-granted aspects of an institution that in the final analysis turn out to be most significant.

The tool for unearthing the obvious is the question, "Why is this _____the way it is and not different?" In more particular forms this question might be:

1. Why is there an American flag hung in this classroom? Why is it not absent? Are there any cases in which it is absent? What happens in these cases?

2. Why does the teacher touch the heads of her students? Are there any regularities in who she touches or who she doesn't touch? If so, what might happen if she began to touch the untouched, or stopped touching altogether?

Compared with the most common ways in which "education" has been practiced throughout most of human history, American classrooms are odd not only in terms of what happens there, but in terms of what does not happen. We might ask, "Why is there no circumcision rite for eighth-grade boys?"

So the first assumption is that much of what goes on in school, while it may be commonplace to us as observers, and to the participants, is nonetheless extraordinary. The next assumption is that what goes on in school is not only a matter of relations between individual teachers, and students and parents but of relations among students as groups, among teachers as groups, relations between the school as a whole interacting with other social units as wholes (community groups, the larger school system, political and economic entities), outside it. In short, it is assumed that the full significance of many events inside school can only be seen in the context of events throughout the whole school, of influences on the school from outside it, and of influences of the school on the larger society.

Stating Researchable Questions

At this point, it seems to me, it would be appropriate to step back, move to a higher level of abstraction, and ask questions which would define more clearly the terms of inquiry, as well as lead us to evidence about the relationship of schools as wholes to other sociocultural entities as wholes.[12] Here are some examples of possible questions which speak to the issue of "salience of ethnicity" hypotheses.

1. Are there groups (which would meet whatever criteria for the definition of "group" we might choose to establish or adopt) in which ethnic status is a criterial attribute for membership? What about groups based on business and financial status, and groups composed of political office holders?

2. How are these groups distributed throughout the city?

   In terms of residence
   In terms of occupation
   In terms of socio-economic class
   In terms of religious affiliation
   In terms of political affiliation, involvement and exercise of authority

3. What is the nature of relations between groups?

   Are some groups subordinate to others or not? Which are and how? Which aren't and how?

   Where are the more recently arrived groups located in the social structure relative to less recently arrived groups?

   Are there networks of acquaintance between individuals from different groups? Are there individual foci of within-group acquaintance networks? Who is in the networks?

   Are different groups "over-represented" in certain occupational and other kinds of statuses? In organizations dominated by an "over-represented" majority what is the nature of their relations with the "under-represented" minority? Are there formal or informal understandings whereby the underrepresented have access to certain kinds of jobs, influence, contracts, and the over-represented have control over other areas of organizational "turf?" Who controls what? Does a relationship of parity or "distributive justice" obtain about which both groups agree? By what process is parity determined?

4. If the relationships suggested in questions 1-3 obtain for residential, ethnic, and occupational patterns in the neighborhoods, businesses, and governmental organizations for the city as a whole, how does this relate to the structure, operation, and function of the schools?

   Is there over-representation of some categories of persons--ethnic, residential, religious--in the various statuses in the schools--local administrators, teachers, janitors, clerks, parents, students, school-related social agency personnel?

   How does this distribution look at various organizational levels--the upper echelon administrators "downtown," the school board, the building and maintenance contractors, those who lease school-owned real estate, etc? What is the distribution of income (and other specifiable benefits) among the categories?

   In a given local school, and for the system as a whole, do various categories of persons (who identify themselves as such) perceive parity vis-a-vis other groups? Who does and who doesn't? What is their definition of parity?

5. What is the effect of 1-4 above on the organization of everyday life in a given school?

   What do the different categories of persons do most of the time?

   Does ethnicity, residence, religious affiliation, etc., affect the quality of relationships between administrators and teachers? Between teachers and teachers? Between clerks and teachers? Between teachers and students? Between students and students? Between teachers and parents? Between janitors and teachers? Between janitors and lunchroom personnel and students?

   What is "behavior unaffected by ethnic factors?"

   What is "behavior positively affected by ethnic factors?"

   What is "behavior negatively affected by ethnic factors?"

   Who relates to whom in what way? How much? (specify)

What do various categories of persons say about this in formal or informal conversation? Inside school? Outside school? What do they do about it formally and informally?

6. What are the school outcomes valued highly by the various categories of persons?

Outcomes for teachers and administrators? for students? For parents? For businessmen? For governmental officials?

What is the distribution of opinion within a given aggregate?

What is the distribution of "desirable" and "undesirable" outcomes (as defined by any of the aggregates above) among a given ethnic, residential, religious, socio-economic class of persons?

If "undesirable" outcomes are heavily over-represented, how does this relate to that aggregate's definition of "distributive justice?"

Obviously no one ethnographer could cover all of these questions in uniform detail. But if from his reading of the literature, from his informants, and from his observations, he began to sense that "ethnic factors" could explain repeatedly similar behavior (i.e., patterned behavior) in his school community, then he would need to touch bases with various kinds of information on ethnic factors operating in the larger social units of which his school community was a part, and in smaller social units within the school community, right down to the classroom or to the individual parent-teacher conference. He would be led to this various body of information by a variety of research questions. When considering research questions for inquiry, my "rule" is that one's "micro-questions" must always lead out to "macro-questions." I think that ethnography, because of its holism and because of its cross-cultural perspective, provides an inquiry process by which we can ask open-ended questions which will result in new insights about schooling in American society. Many of these insights can be useful to policy planners and community groups. But not as the "God's Truth" they may want yesterday. None of our insights can be billed as "positive knowledge," nor should they be. By presenting our conclusions as possible rather than certain, I think that we can achieve credibility without mystification. To men of action our ethnographic inquiry can be useful by providing them new vantage points for reflection. A modest goal, but an honest one resistant to that inflation of hope whose end is cynicism.

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Footnotes

[1] Compiled by the Rev. Henry George Liddell, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and father of Alice Liddell, "Alice in Wonderland."

[2] Especially fine descriptions of various social units are Goffman's The Boys in White (medical-school students), Smith's The Complexities of an Urban Classroom (students and teacher), Goffman's Encounters (doctors and nurses in a surgical team), Donald Roy's "Banana Time: Job Satisfaction and Informal Interaction" in Human Organization 18:4 (Winter 1959-60), (workers in a factory), Melville Dalton's Men who Manage (workers and supervisors in a factory), and Jules Henry's Culture Against Man (students and teachers, parents and children, old people, the mentally ill). Only the latter is fully ethnographically descriptive, according to my definition.

[3] This approach to fieldwork developed partly in reaction to the failure of the late 19th Century ethnological research, conducted without fieldwork from written accounts by such "armchair" anthropologists as Tylor (see the articles on Malinowski, Boas, and Radcliffe-Brown in the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1968 ed., Lowie, op. cit., and for examples of the ethnographies, Malinowski's Argonauts of the Western Pacific, Radcliffe-Brown's Andaman Islanders, Evans-Pritchard's The Nuer, and Firth's We, The Tikopia.

[4] Actually there are many ways in which social forms analogous to those of the primitive village survive in the school, but these are the aspects of the school declared illicit by the formal rule system--teacher and student "cliques," teacher and principal favoritism, knowledge handled as sacred and traditional rather than as secular and non-traditional, informal authority in excess of that to which one's formal status entitles one (i.e., the special authority of the principal's secretary and certain janitors) etc. "Formal vs. informal rule system" thus becomes a special topic for analysis.

[5] See Marcel Mauss' The Gift, Dalton and Bohannon's Economic Anthropology, and Homans' Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms.

[6] Note the implicit "students-cattle" simile in the term "stampede."

[7] Tyler's Cognitive Anthropology, Garfinkel and Sack's Case Studies in Ethnomethodology, and Douglas' The Sociology of Everyday Life can provide starting points for this line of inquiry. On the thought process of students see Thomas Gladwin's East is a Big Bird: Navigation and Logic on Pulawat Atoll, and Michael Cole, et al., The Cultural Context of Learning and Thinking.

[8] For background see Jacquetta Hill Burnett, "Ceremony, Rites, and Economy in the Student System of an American High School," in Human Organization 28:1-10 (Spring 1969).

[9] Rudolph Arnheim's Visual Thinking presents a compelling analysis of the "logic of caricature" and other processes of visual abstraction which involve the selection and arrangement of details, leaving out some, others in, placing some in conspicuous position, others in subsidiary positions --all in a process of decision, whether conscious or subliminal. The analogy between this visual decision process and the way the anthropologist selects and arranges material from his field experience is a striking one, and makes Arnheim well worth reading.

[10] I think Henry's Culture Against Man is an excellent model for the clear presentation of fundamental assumptions about the nature of the society he was studying, even though he did not provide an equally clear view of the methodological assumptions guiding his research process.

[11] For descriptions of epistemological and ethical issues in fieldwork, see Richard Adams, and J. S. Preiss' Human Organization Research; Severyn Bruyn, Human Perspective in Sociology; The Methodology of Participant Observation; Paul Bohannon on "culture shock" and "translation process" in Social Anthropology, and Eleanor Smith Bowen's (Laura Bohannon) Return to Laughter, and Hortense Powdermaker's Stranger and Friend.

[12] Here I think the most integrated recent statement is Pelto's Anthropological Research: The Structure of Inquiry. Material that is also very helpful, but presented in a less-integrated format is R. Naroll and R. Cohen's A Handbook of Method of Cultural Anthropology.

A RETIRING EDITOR'S NOTE

Having put together the last Newsletter to be produced at Pittsburgh, there are mixed feelings of regret and relief. Starting from scratch, the Newsletter has been supported basically by the enthusiasm of CAE members, officers, and contributors. As an informal proto-journal, it has been an experiment in communication among those of us concerned with the meeting of anthropology and education. We hope that it will continue to serve this purpose as it evolves new directions under editorial leadership from Professor Chilcott. As the vehicle for transmission of our common professional culture, and for efforts at changing that culture, we look forward to the changes and challenges of the future.

Some specific acknowledgements are in order. Murray Wax must be credited with the original idea for the Newsletter--conveyed persuasively to the present editor late at night during an AERA annual meeting. More importantly, he provided the organizational and personal support to make a Newsletter feasible. Editorial responsibilities were later shared with Jacquetta Burnett, who was also our first substantial contributor of an article, and John Herzog who took up the challenge to edit a regular department, Singara. A series of Pittsburgh staff and graduate students have provided the backbone of production, including our chief typist (and occasional critic) Carol Jones. Others were Elion Miller, Geraldine Korb, Lois Anne Saito, Leslie B. Posner, Arthur A. Katz, and Travis Mattox. The University of Pittsburgh, the International and Development Education Program, and the University Center for International Studies have contributed the staff necessary for these processes. A grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation provided initial financial support before we had a dues-paying membership.

John Singleton